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4701 WILLARD AVENUE, CHEVY CHASE, MARYLAND 20815

(301) 656-4068

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SUBJECT Chemical Espionage

FORREST SAWYER: It has certainly been causing quite a stir. The Soviet Union's alleged use of spy dust may lead to a dustup between that country and the United States. The State Department is accusing the Soviets of using an invisible chemical, placed on objects like doorknobs, steering wheels, to track the movements and the meetings of Americans in Moscow.

We thought we'd find out just a little bit about this, so we're going to talk with Robert Kaiser. He is the former Moscow bureau chief of the Washington Post. Now he is based in Washington. He is at our CBS bureau in Washington this morning. And also with us, right here in New York, is Admiral Stansfield Turner, of course, the former Director of the CIA, now a consultant to CBS News.

Admiral, let me begin with you. Explain to me what is the value of this dust.

ADMIRAL STANSFIELD TURNER: I think this is a technique that the Soviets are using to keep track of their own people, which ones are in contact with outsiders. You know, the Soviets have a very repressive society and they don't want their people learning what goes on outside of their own society. So they put this dust around doorknobs, on other objects in our embassy, or maybe outside the homes of Americans in Moscow. Then if an American does go and have a dinner with a Soviet, for instance, in his apartment, that dust gets carried to the doorknobs, the furniture, and such forth, in the dissident's apartment.

I think the Soviets then have to have a clue that that Soviet dissident, or whomever, is in contact with Americans. Because the device for detecting this powder is not a long-range

thing. You can't do it a mile away or a block away. You've got to have some idea this is the apartment you want to go to and check.

SAWYER: So they keep an eye on you.

Bob Kaiser, you're in Washington. We are hearing that the Administration knew that this powder was being used in one form or another, or at least the capability was there, way back in 1976. Did you have any inkling about it when you were in Moscow?

ROBERT KAISER: You know, I was blonde when I sent to the Soviet Union originally.

[Laughter]

KAISER: No, we had no inkling at all. And I just -- I'm astounded. Of course, you get very nervous to hear that you've been exposed to something like this. I'm not sure that I was.

I think Admiral Turner's absolutely right, although it's baffling to me that they think they need this. When they wanted to know where I was, they followed me around, a great number of them, often, three cars full at one time. I don't think they really needed this device, except perhaps for the most clandestine, secret operations involving people that may have formerly worked for Admiral Turner.

SAWYER: So you were very aware of being observed at all times.

KAISER: Oh, yes. It's a very deliberate part of Soviet policy to make foreigners in that country feel watched. They want you to feel that looking over your shoulder, in hopes, I think, of intimidating what you'll do.

SAWYER: Admiral, what about this report that 1976 was the time when they first knew about the chemical?

ADMIRAL TURNER: The report actually, as stated yesterday, was that they knew this chemical existed then. I don't believe there was evidence through 1980 that the chemical was being used in Moscow. I think there's a big difference here.

SAWYER: When you were CIA Director, did you have your people test to see if the chemical was being used?

ADMIRAL TURNER: We had all kinds of tests being made. And in fact, a very interesting one that I had made one time. We sent a special team over to check the embassy from top to bottom.

And one of the weaknesses in our embassy there is we have so many Soviet employees inside it. They have zero Americans in their embassy in this country.

And as my team went through from room to room, just by coincidence a Soviet charwoman would appear and knock on the door and say, "I've got to clean this room right now."

SAWYER: Just at that moment.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Just at that moment. And those are the kinds of people who are putting this dust around the embassy, in my opinion. And we have got to protect ourselves better by getting them out of that embassy, replacing them with Americans. It'll be expensive because, as Bob Kaiser I'm sure would confirm, Americans don't really like to live in Moscow.

SAWYER: You mentioned one about finding an antenna in a chimney, did you say?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Yes. Well, there was a chimney that butted up against our building. And in one of the checks we were making to see what was happening against our people, one of our people had a brainstorm and he poked a hole in that chimney and looked inside and found this electronic antenna that was on a pulley that could be raised and lowered. This person climbed in the chimney, lowered himself down to the bottom found a room with all kinds of electronics in it, and a tunnel going into the next building. He, on his hands and knees, crawled through the tunnel with a flashlight. And lo and behold, Forrest, he met a Soviet coming the other direction with a flashlight. These two little people turned and went out in...

[Confusion of voices]

SAWYER: We've got just a few minutes. We want to have a look at what effect this is going to have on the summit.

Do you think this information is surfacing coincidentally with that timing?

KAISER: Well, you know, it's now three days in a row of kind of negative signals in making ready for the summit. I'm sort of baffled as to what the Reagan Administration thinks it's accomplishing here, unless it's actually trying to create a hostile atmosphere.

But, yes, it will have repercussions. The Soviet are great conspiracy theorists. They will see that this is all orchestrated to do some evil purpose. And I'm baffled by it, myself.

SAWYER: What effect do you think it's acutally going to have? Some sort of negative effect, cleary.

KAISER: Well, in my view, the question for the summit, from the Soviet point of view, is: Are they now going to find a new Ronald Reagan, different from the one that they've been very frustrated with for the last five years, but who is ready to make a deal? I think the signals they're seeing now say no, it's the same old Reagan, and there's going to be no deal.

Now, this is a perfectly legitimate American policy. But it looks increasingly to me that that is the policy and that we're not really prepared to make any big changes for this November summit.

SAWYER: Well, we're going to keep our eye on it and see which way it turns.